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Doctors Let Nixon Leave Bed

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LONG BEACH, Calif., Nov. 4—Former President Nixon improved enough today for his doctors to allow him to get out of bed for the first time since post-operative shock brought him to the brink of death last Tuesday night.

They told his nurses at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center to help him take a few steps around his hospital room, but to watch carefully that this exercise did not cause any unusual changes in his heart rhythm or blood pressure.

His doctors said that Mr. Nixon, 61, continues to show gradual improvement after having been taken off the critical list Sunday. They reported that his vital signs—pulse, blood pressure, respiration and temperature—remained stable.

But Dr. John C. Lungren, Mr. Nixon's principal physician, said that he is concerned over the fact that a small amount of fluid has remained in Mr. Nixon's left lung.

The doctors are hoping the fluid, which could cause a collapse of Mr. Nixon's lung and problems with his breathing, will be absorbed naturally.

Meanwhile, for at least two days, they have been giving the former president treatments designed to keep his lungs expanded. They have ordered Mr. Nixon to cough frequently and to do deep breathing exercises—normal instructions to a bedridden patient following surgery to keep his lungs free of fluid. And yesterday, they revealed the start of positive pressure breathing treatments for 10 minutes every four hours. This treatment forces air under pressure into Mr. Nixon's lungs to keep them expanded.

Lungren blamed the fluid in Mr. Nixon's lung on an "irritation of the diaphragm" that arose from a large mass of clotted blood that had collected in his left lower back.

This blood, which came from the massive internal bleeding that threw Mr. Nixon into shock last Tuesday, six hours after surgery, is pressing upward on his left lung.

Doctors operated on Mr. Nixon early last Tuesday morning to stop clots formed as a result of phlebitis in his left leg from flowing to his lungs, where they could cause death. The doctors placed a blood gate — a small plastic clip — on his iliac vein to stop a clot from flowing to his lungs.

Lungren also announced today that blood specialists at the hospital are trying to find out what caused a sudden drop in Mr. Nixon's blood platelet cell count last week. The former President has received nine units of the platelets, a clotting factor in the blood, since Thursday. Although his platelet count has improved, Lungren indicated today that Mr. Nixon still has a "platelet deficiency."

Looking ahead to continuing treatment for phlebitis when Mr. Nixon leaves the hospital —a time at least two weeks away—drug experts here are working with experts at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond to determine the best way to give Mr. Nixon the anti-clotting drug coumadin.

Mr. Nixon failed to respond to normal doses of the drug last month, but Dr. William Smith, director of Pharmacy service at the hospital here, said new computer studies will allow doctors to taior the dosage and the way the drug is given to Mr. Nixon's own biological responses.